

A First Confession

(for Adults)

IF you have done wrong, you want Absolution. Absolution is more than forgiveness. Our Father always forgives us when we are really sorry; but sin leaves a stain upon our soul. This stain can only be got out by being washed in the most precious Blood of Jesus. This washing is called Absolution.

It cost Jesus all His sufferings and death to get us Absolution. If we want Absolution, we must pay our part of the cost. We must bear the pain of Confession.

Confession means saying plainly what is the matter. If you are ill, and go to the doctor, he will say, "What is the matter?" and you must tell him as much as you can about it. If your soul is ill, you must go to the soul doctor, the priest, and tell him exactly what is the matter. If you do not know what to say, begin by praying about it, like this—

O my Father, I want to be absolved from my sins, because I hate them and they hurt Thee. Please help me to remember them, and show me how to say them to Thy priest; for Jesus' sake.

Now, as this is your first confession, you must try not to leave out even the time of your childhood. Get paper and a pencil. Try to recall the time when you were about five till you were eight or nine. There may be one or two sins at that time that you cannot forget, such as stealing a penny or two, doing something very unkind, playing games that were not modest.

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Then take the time from eight years old until you left school. You must first recall the houses you lived in, the school, the different teachers, your friends, and your playgrounds.

Then write down what you can remember of how you treated God—

Did you say your prayers and go to Mass?

Did you make fun of your religion?

What were you like at home? Recall any bad trouble you got into—bad lies, bad tempers.

What were you like at school? Were you dishonest in any way? Cheating? Lazy at work? Getting others blamed for your fault?

What about your own self? Did you begin bad habits of any kind? Lying in bed? Swearing? Joining in unclean talk? Doing shameful, unclean things alone, or with others? Did you get into bad company?

Be honest about these things, no matter how you may hate saying it. If you stole, say what you took. If you lied, say whether you did it for fear, or for boasting, or to get something for yourself. Say if you did it on purpose, or without thinking. If you had bad habits, say what they were, and don't be afraid.

Now, if you have done this part properly, you will find it easier to write down about your life from schooldays until, say, eighteen or twenty. Go over the questions again. Put down anything that is specially on your conscience about those days of youth when you first faced the new temptations and doubts which you met in your business or your pleasure.

Last of all, question yourself about the present time, in this way—

What about my religious duties—prayers, Mass, and Communion?

What about my business life?

What about my home life? Am I uncharitable; irritable; bad-tempered; spiteful; selfish?

What about holy purity! Have I done anything shameful alone, or with another? What about the pictures I look at, the books I read, and the thoughts I think? Are they pure and modest?

Am I slothful? Intemperate? Conceited? Untruthful?

Do I grumble about things?

Is there anyone I cannot forgive?

If you are conscious that you are at fault in any of these ways, say plainly how far you give way to them. Give some instances in each case. Say if you give way very often. Say if you have sinned in any way which makes it worse. For instance, one might have been sulky for a whole week together, or one might have left out one's prayers for weeks at a time.

Now, when it is all done, say carefully—
O God, my God, Thou hast loved me so, and Thou hast wanted me all the time, and I have just let things go, and forgotten how the Sacred Heart of Jesus was being wounded. I am so sorry. I will try to do better.

You are now ready to make your Confession. Remember that you are coming to ask forgiveness for your own sins, not those of other people. Therefore, be careful not to mention the names of others, nor their sins. Be objective; speak clearly but not loudly; do not waste valuable time making excuses. Take your paper to your priest, kneel down and say—

I CONFESS to Almighty God, to all the Saints, and to you, Father, that I have sinned very much, in thought, word, deed, and omission, by my own great fault. I have committed these sins since I can remember.

[Then read from your paper all that is written, and when you have finished, say]

For these and all other sins which I cannot now remember, I am very sorry. I will try to do better, and I humbly ask pardon of God; and of you Father, I ask for penance, advice and absolution. Amen.

Remember, the priest is a fellow-sinner, who himself has to make his Confession very often. He never thinks of your sins afterwards, and he never dare tell a living soul. He will give you Absolution if you are sorry, and then you will be free, for your soul is washed white in the Blood of Jesus.

The priest will give you a penance, perhaps a prayer or a hymn to say, and you must say it before you go out of church if you can. Or it may be a harder one, something to do or say for a few days. Our real Penance is, of course, to accept humbly all troubles and ills that may come upon us.

When you make your next Confession, you can use the last part of this paper again; but, in saying the form of the Confession, instead of the words "since I can remember," you must say "since my last Confession, which wasweeks ago."